



February 20, 2024

Good Afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and Members of the Appropriations Committee and Members of the Taxation Committee,

My name is Lauren Leonard and I am the Recovery Coach Coordinator at the Larry Labonte Recovery Center in Rumford. I am a person in long-term recovery with over six years of sobriety. Prior to being employed with LLRC, I had always worked dead-end retail or food jobs, often alongside coworkers who had criminal records or struggled with SUD. Being a convicted felon severely impacted my ability to be able to obtain full-time, gainful employment. Although I had done my time, completed probation and maintained my sobriety for a significant amount of time, I often felt as if I was stuck with just 'getting by.'

Recovery centers play a pivotal role in offering employment opportunities to individuals with criminal records and SUD. These centers recognize the value of providing second chances and believe in the potential for rehabilitation and redemption. Recovery Centers create a supportive and understanding work environment that fosters personal growth and development. Through gainful employment, individuals like me with criminal records and SUD, not only secure financial stability but also gain a sense of purpose and belonging.

I urge the appropriations committee to prioritize funding for LD1714 so people like me can continue to give back to the community the best way we know how – by sharing lived experiences and setting the example that a better life is possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

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